

We support Jessica's Act, clerk safety

Eight months have gone by. The "missing" posters and signs of support for finding Jessica Heeringa are slowly, sadly and steadily disappearing from our community



What's left in the wake of her disappearance are a grieving family and lingering questions.

What if there had been an additional clerk on duty that night? What if there had been proper security cameras? What if ...?

We may never know the answers to our questions, but we do know that Jessica may now have an enduring legacy of helping to ensure the safety of other night clerks.

State Rep. Collene Lamonte, D-Montague, has proposed the Jessica Heeringa Act, which would put into place improved security requirements for gas stations and convenience stores that stay open between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. Such stores would be required to have two clerks on duty at night, or the installation of adequate security camera surveillance.

This seems like solid common sense, and most good business owners already have similar practices. But apparently this must be legislated so those not-so-inclined business owners are required to do the right thing.

Good for Lamonte, and good for Jessica.

While we should never give up on Jessica, or on finding answers for her family, we should also look to what good can come out of this terrible situation.

And this legislation would be a tremendous step toward finding that positive measure. We support Jessica, her family and this proposed legislation. We implore you to contact your elected representatives in Lansing and ask them to approve the Jessica Heeringa Act.

Do it for Jessica, and do it for all those other night clerks out there who are somebody's daughter. mother, grandson or brother.

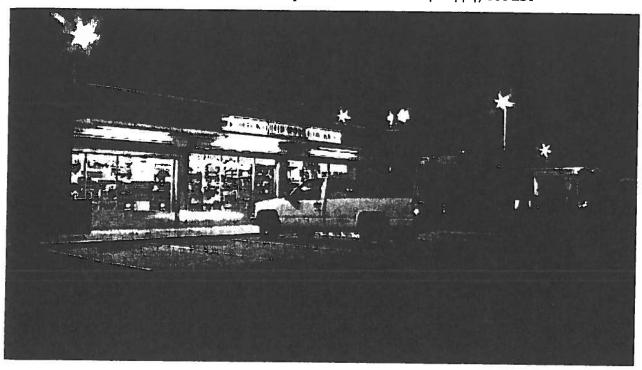
Our Views reflects the majority opinion of the members of the Grand Haven Tribune editorial board: Kevin Hook, Cheryl Welch, Matt De Young, Alex Doty and Fred VandenBrand. What do you think? E-mail us a letter to the editor to news a grandhaventribune.com or log-in to our website and leave a comment below



How safe are convenience stores in Jacksonville?

Shooting death at gas station prompts look into safety regulations

Author: Adrienne Moore, Weekend anchor, reporter, amoore@wjxt.com
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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -

Gas stations and convenience stores are often a prime target for criminals.

On Sunday, 24-year-old Gate gas station clerk Timothy McIntree was shot and killed during a robbery on Busch Drive.

His killer is still on the run, and investigators have not released any surveillance images from inside the store at the time of the crime.

After the violent crime, News4Jax dug deeper into the security measures in place for employees and customers of convenience stores in Jacksonville.

At the Hendricks Food Mart in San Marco, eight security cameras are stationed inside and outside the store.

The family-owned convenience store adheres to Florida law, which requires cameras, a silent alarm and lighted parking lots at every convenience store in the state. Manager Kambiz Sayeg said his store couples those measures with regular police patrols and makes sure employees aren't alone during night shifts.

"I think the neighborhood tells it all. We live in a really good neighborhood. We have a lot of regulars and residents always walking through, and thank God for police officers who are always in San Marco making sure everybody is safe," said Sayeg. "You stay alert. Of course you stay alert and we also have an employee around. There's two of us working at a time. I have my concealed weapons license, but you know, knock on wood, I've never used it."

Florida law also calls for other safety measures between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m., but only if the business has had a previous robbery, battery or kidnapping.

If that's the case, the law requires more than one employee on site, bullet resistant material at the front counter and a security guard.

Local attorney John Phillips said it's cameras outside that can often make the biggest difference, but they're also the cameras missing from about 25 percent of Jacksonville gas stations and stores. He said state laws should go a step further by requiring exterior cameras at all gas stations and convenience stores.

Phillips said he understands that would come with a cost, but he argued it could change the course of cases, like the recent trial of Michael Dunn.

"How many people have to be robbed, have to go through theft, you know have to pay the ultimate price just to save a few bucks?" Phillips said. "Would we have had an arrest sooner (in Jordan Davis' killing)? Would we have known more information the night of? Would we have had to sit through two trials where Michael Dunn was able to defame Jordan Davis? Absolutely not. ... And it's those clues it gives to the family. It's the closure of what happened.

"They need to do more," he said. "It's a high-profit business. They need to do more to keep the public safe."

Sayeg said he's planning to install a large TV monitor above the entrance and exit doors as a signal to criminals they're being watched. He's hoping to have that in place sometime early next year.

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Convenience store clerk shot during robbery

By - Associated Press - Tuesday, November 11, 2014

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) - Delaware State Police say a clerk was shot during a robbery of a Wilmington convenience store.

It happened about 3 a.m. Tuesday at the 7-Eleven on Governor Printz Boulevard. Troopers say a man with a handgun demanded money from a clerk behind the counter.

Police say apparently the clerk moved too slowly for the suspect, and the robber shot him in the leg. The suspect grabbed cash from the register and fled on foot.

The clerk was taken to a local hospital in stable condition.

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NorthJersey.com



Garfield man indicted in armed robbery of Elmwood Park convenience store

BY PETER J. SAMPSON

A Garfield man who wore a motorcycle helmet as he allegedly held up an Elmwood Park convenience store at gunpoint in August, was indicted Monday on armed robbery and weapons charges.

A grand jury in Hackensack returned a four-count indictment against Ariel P. Drapczynski, 30, in connection with the August 15 heist.

Drapczynski, who is currently in state prison, was indicted on armed robbery and three weapons counts — including possession of a black handgun for an unlawful purpose, possession of a gun without having obtained a carry permit, and being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Drapczynski has at least five convictions stemming from arrests dating back to 2003, according to court records. He has been convicted of aggravated assault, theft by unlawful taking, using false documents to obtain a driver's license, and eluding police. In September, he was sentenced to a one-year state term for tampering with evidence and was transferred from the Bergen County Jail to state prison, records show.

His face obscured by his helmet, Drapczynski allegedly pointed a gun at the store employee, stole cash and cigarettes, and made his getaway on a motorcycle. Elmwood Park police said.

A Bergen County Police SWAT team joined by officers from Garfield and Elmwood Park surrounded a Plauderville Avenue home several days later, evacuating some area residents as they searched for Drapczynski. He was caught a day later, after authorities received a tip from a resident that he was in the area.



Anel Oracczynski

Following Drapezynski's arrest, investigators found evidence linking him to the helmets worn by a pair of motorcycle bandits during a similar holdup in January in Passaic County.

Drapczynski and Tomasz Maczka, 29, also of Garfield, are awaiting grand jury action in connection with the robbery of a Quick Stop store in Haskell in which two men forced employees at gunpoint to the floor, stole cash and escaped on a single motorcycle.

Police said they were able to match the helmets allegedly worn by the bandits with a helmet recovered from Drapczynski's home and another distinctive helmet that he is wearing in photographs that he posted on his Facebook page.

Email: sampson@northjersey.com







2014 North Jersey Media Group



David Kolb: There should be no delay by lawmakers on 'Jessica's Law'

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David Kolb | The Muskegon Chronicle By David Kolb | The Muskegon Chronicle Follow on Twitter

on January 13, 2014 at 3:02 PM, updated January 13, 2014 at 3:09 PM

RECENT NEWS ITEM (from the MLive/Muskegon Chronicle Capitol Workbook): "The previously announced 'Jessica's Law' bill by state Rep. Collene Lamonte, D-Montague, still is waiting for action (by the Legislature) ..."

A while back, I walked into a local police station and asked to speak to an officer about something that was bothering me in regard to the Jessica Heeringa abduction case.

I was conflicted about this visit because I felt in some measure as if I were making a terrible mistake in talking to the police about what might be no more than a groundless suspicion.

Yet there I was.

After talking it over my wife and some friends, I decided I shouldn't be the judge of what might be useful to authorities in their search for the still-missing 26-year-old service station clerk.

But I was also aware that I was in all probability casting a shadow on an innocent man.

Even during the moments I was parking at the police department, I was still debating what course of action to take, whether to sit on what I thought I observed and to shut up, or to play the civic-minded fool and talk to the police and possibly implicate someone whose only crime was to stand in front of me in line.

Well, I played the fool and implicated the man.

Here's what led me to make my decision.

On the night in question, I was returning home from a meeting and stopped at a service station in our area. I really didn't pay much attention to the other people in the store. I stood in line, paid for my gas and handed the young lady behind the counter a dollar and a Mega Millions form I had filled in with my numbers.

David Kolb: There should be no delay by lawmakers on 'Jessica's Law'

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But I had messed it up and had to fill out another form. When I got back in line I was behind a man and in front of a woman. The man and the clerk were bantering with each other. The woman behind me butted into their conversation.

"Are you alone here?" she asked the clerk.

"Yeah," was the answer. She told the lady her work partner had called in sick that night.

That snippet of conversation jogged my memory. I looked at the guy in front of me who was chatting up the clerk. In my mind, he was a reasonable facsimile of the drawing of a possible person of interest that was being promoted by police at the time of the crime.

When the woman pointed out the clerk was alone, a chill went up my spine. I didn't know any of these people, but my thinking was, you never know. Meanwhile, the man in front of me paid his bill and left.

I handed the clerk my lottery ticket and looked out the window. I caught the man's license plate and wrote it down when I got back to my car. The whole instance bothered me all that night and the following day.

What should I have done? What would you have done?

Maybe there's no right answer. But I'll tell you what, though.

The fact the Legislature hasn't rushed through "Jessica's Law" is a travesty. So is the fact that only a single Republican member of the state House – there are 59 in the majority party there - has thus far signed on to Lamonte's bill.

Really? Is this about politics?

I hope not. I don't ever want to see a vulnerable convenience store clerk working alone again during a late shift without the minimum protection of another worker or a mandated security camera system in place on the premises.

Shame on the Legislature for not making this a priority.

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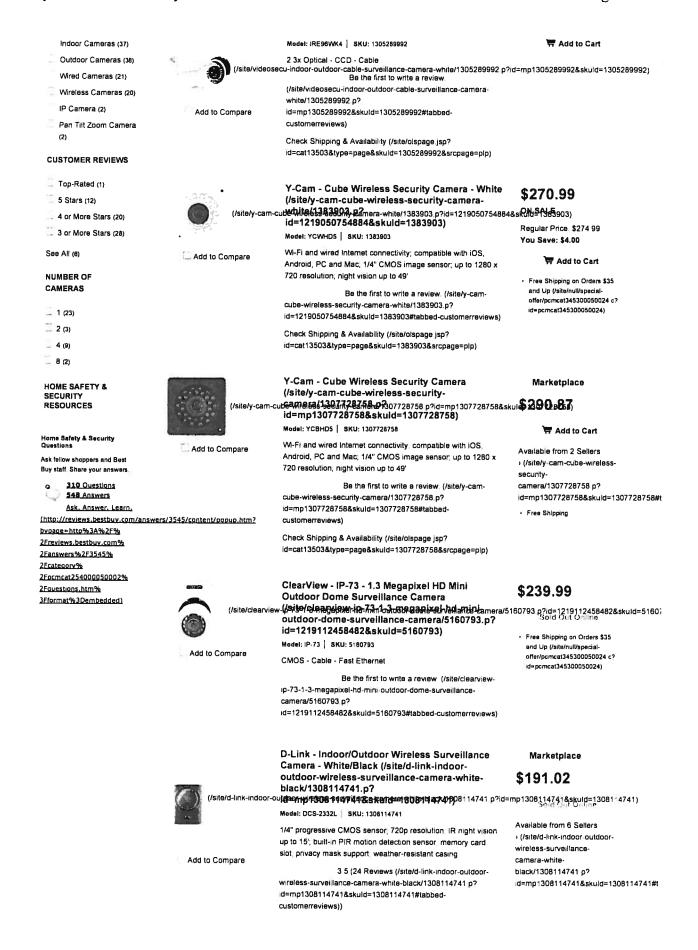
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